

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-10 (canceled)

Claim 11 (currently amended): A method of producing a protein of interest, comprising:
culturing a Gram positive bacterial strain of a *Streptococcaceae* family that expresses
said protein, wherein the size of the genome of the bacterial strain is equal to or less than 3.2 Mb,
and wherein the bacterial strain does not express a functional HtrA protease: and,
recovering said protein exported by said strain in the culture medium.

Claim 12 (canceled)

Claim 13 (currently amended): A method according to claim 11, wherein the bacterial
strain is a member of either the *Streptococcus* genus ~~selected from a group consisting of~~
~~*Streptococcaceae*, *Lactobacillaceae*, *Bacillaceae* of the *Staphylococcus* genus, *Bacillaceae* of~~
~~the *Listeria* genus, and *Enterococcaceae* of the *Enterococcus* or the *Lactococcus* genus.~~

Claim 14 (currently amended): A method according to claim ~~11~~ 13, wherein the bacterial
strain is ~~selected from a group consisting of *Lactococcus* spp., *Lactobacillus* spp., and a member~~
of either the *Streptococcus thermophilus* species or the *Lactococcus lactis* species.

Claim 15 (currently amended): A method according to claim 11, wherein the bacterial
strain also does not express a functional PrtP protease.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A method according to claim 11, further comprising:
introducing into the bacterial strain a nucleic acid having a sequence encoding a protein
of interest operably linked to a promoter; and

culturing the bacterial strain under conditions causing expression of the protein from the nucleic acid.

Claim 17 (currently amended): A Gram positive bacterial strain of the *Streptococcaceae* family having a genome that is equal to or less than 3.2 Mb in size, said strain:

comprises an expression cassette having a sequence encoding a protein of interest operably linked to a promoter;

~~with the proviso that said bacterial strain is not a *Lactobacillus helveticus* strain having a *gusA* reporter gene inserted into a gene encoding the HtrA protease.~~

Claim 18 (currently amended): A bacterial strain according to claim 17, wherein the strain also does not express a functional PrtP protease.

Claim 19 (withdrawn): A method of producing a fermented product, comprising: culturing a bacterial strain according to claim 23 with a fermentation substrate under conditions suitable to produce a fermented product.

Claim 20 (withdrawn): A method of producing a dietetic food, comprising: culturing a bacterial strain according to claim 23 with a substrate under conditions suitable to produce a dietetic food.

Claim 21 (withdrawn): A method of producing a medicinal product, comprising: culturing a bacterial strain according to claim 23 HtrA with a suitable substrate under conditions effective to produce a medicinal product.

Claim 22 (withdrawn): A method according to claim 21, wherein the medicinal product is a vaccine.

Claim 23 (canceled)